

# MACEDONIAN SETTLEMENT

Cambridge, Mass., May 1, 1919.

To the Editor of *The New York Times*:

In your editorial article on "Macedonia and Hungary" of April 28, 1919, you have done me the honor to compliment the moderate spirit with which my letter of April 19, 1919, published in last Sunday's *TIMES*, was written. Will you be so kind as to insert in the columns of *THE TIMES* further consideration in regard to the Macedonian question? In doing this I shall not deviate from my former position to speak in the interest of fair play—an American trait, to be sure; but I think like an American, and I shall be a traitor to my conscience if I don't speak like an American. I shall, however, not seek refuge under President Wilson's fourteen points in order to safeguard the rights of the Macedonian people. Any one who knows the Balkan situation is convinced that such pretense is not necessary to prove the expediency for an independent Macedonia.

I am aware of the fact that the Bulgarian Government or some Bulgarian officials have been accused of having committed atrocities. I do not question the veracity of the accusation, provided an investigation has been impartially conducted by reliable persons whose standing is of international repute. We have one sad precedent. Bulgaria was condemned by the whole civilized world during the second Balkan war for atrocities. The *London Times* and the *Paris Temps* published lurid accounts of atrocities said to have been committed by the Bulgarians, but these same papers, at the time the Carnegie Commission report was published, wrote lengthy editorials retracting everything they had previously said against Bulgaria. I would advise a little moderation at least until Bulgaria has made a statement in regard to the alleged massacres, lest the conscientious press should feel again the pangs of self-remorse. I am not defending Bulgaria, but the Macedonians—Albanians, Vlachs, Jews, and Bulgarians—feel that the Greeks and the Serbs are equally as guilty of heinous crimes as the Bulgars.

I would suggest that an international commission headed by men like Lord Bryce, whose authority on the Balkan question is not to be disputed and whose integrity cannot be questioned, should be appointed. Then upon the findings of this commission an international court should pronounce condign punishment upon the culprits, be they Bulgarians, Greeks, or Serbs. One has to subdue a certain amount of reluctance in telling his own troubles, but I am impelled in the interests of justice to speak my mind before the American people in order that the life, happiness, and future progress of the Macedonian

people should be guaranteed. The victims of these crimes are the Macedonian people. Is it not, then, all the more convincing that they should be granted independence?

I agree with Dr. Reiss's statement that the people of Monastir changed the endings of their names from Serbian form into Bulgarian or vice versa. Why that change? Any one who has lived in Monastir knows that the Bulgarian ending was prevalent before the Balkan wars. When the Serbians occupied Monastir the officials ordered that the terminations of the family names ending with *eff* or *off* should be dropped and *itch* should be used from there on. Nearly all of the 40,000 Macedonian Bulgarians who reside in the United States were implored by their home folk to change the endings of their names to *itch* or to a Greek ending if they expected their letters to reach home.

One might excuse this bungling policy on the part of the Serbians, who had not the experience of the Greek in attempting to manufacture Greeks out of Vlachs, Albanians, Bulgarians, and Jews in Macedonia. Venizelos and Pashitch, the defenders of Balkan imperialism, might have learned a lesson from Bismarck, the Blood and Iron Chancellor, who in spite of his imperialism had the good sense to realize that nationality cannot be crushed. But this wretched process of denationalization is being practiced, on paper at least, within the gates of this liberal and great Republic. No Macedonian Bulgarian can get a passport to leave New York unless he signs himself, his parents, and grandparents either as Greek or Serbian. Only a few weeks ago I reproached a Bulgarian friend of mine who in order to get a passport had signed himself as Serbian. He looked at me pitifully and said, "I can't see my folks otherwise." Bulgaria also has been accused of the same methods of denationalization, and that goes to prove the incompetence of the Balkan States to rule Macedonia. It further strengthens the argument in favor of independent Macedonia.

Concerning your statement that the Macedonian Slavs can be successfully amalgamated, may I not say that experience tends to prove the reverse? Of course, politicians are capable of turning the white into black and the black into white, but their rapid transformation of nationalism is frequently merely superficial. If amalgamation were possible, why did the Serbian authorities rule Macedonia with repressive laws? Why did Serbia keep in Macedonia an army of 100,000 men to hold the people down from revolting? Why has Bulgaria, as we have been recently told, adopted the same means to amalgamate

certain parts of Serbian Macedonia? This is the answer: It is a sociological axiom that oppression has always produced opposition. This principle has been illustrated by the history of Poland, Jugoslavia, and Lithuania. But this retaliation in kind, as it is practiced in the Balkans, will never lead to amalgamation, but subject the Macedonian peasant to further massacres and sufferings.

Forty years ago an autonomy for Macedonia would have been possible, but Bismarck, Andrassy, and Lord Beaconsfield, the great triumvirate of European reactionary diplomacy, enacted the tragedy at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, and handed back Macedonia to the tender mercy of the Turks. After forty years of repeated massacres, of revolutions and counter-revolutions, and of wars the tragedy was re-enacted at Bucharest in 1913. Will the Paris Peace Conference repeat the tragedy?

Let us hope that the sad experience of the past will guide ultimately the decision of the Paris Peace Conference. The Macedonian question is the crux of the Balkan problem. I think that all fair-minded students of Balkan politics are confident that when the delegates to the Peace Conference consider the Balkan situation, President Wilson will assert the same leadership in securing a just and equitable settlement in the Balkans which he displayed in regard to the disputes of the Rhine frontier, the Adriatic, and the Shantung Peninsula. If there is any place in Europe where idealism is needed, it surely is the Balkan Peninsula. V. K. SUGAREFF.